

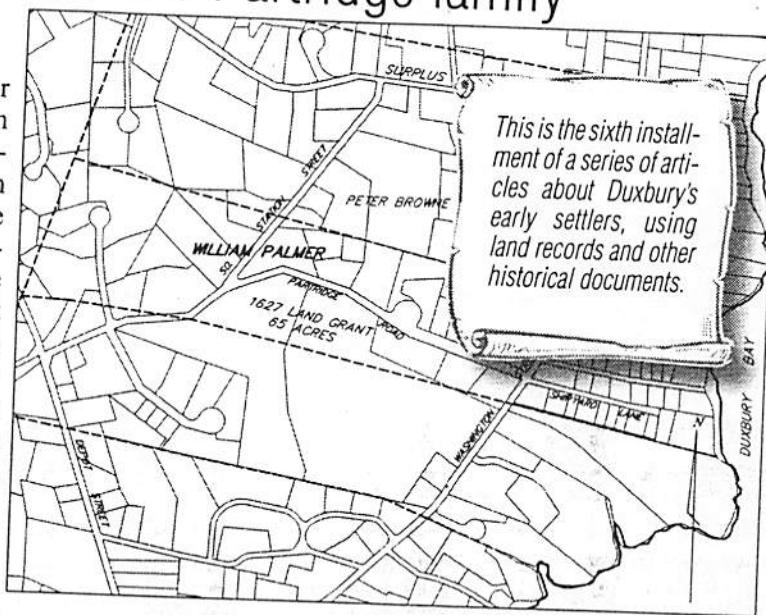
# Duxbury's early settlers <sup>HISTORY</sup>

## William Palmer and the Partridge family

BY LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY  
SPECIAL TO THE CLIPPER

**W**illiam Palmer and his son William, Jr. arrived aboard the Fortune in 1621. The Fortune was the first ship to arrive in Plymouth after the Mayflower. The ship sailed from England, but had friends and family of the Pilgrims aboard from Leyden, Holland. William, Sr.'s wife, Mary, arrived later on the Anne, the third ship to arrive.

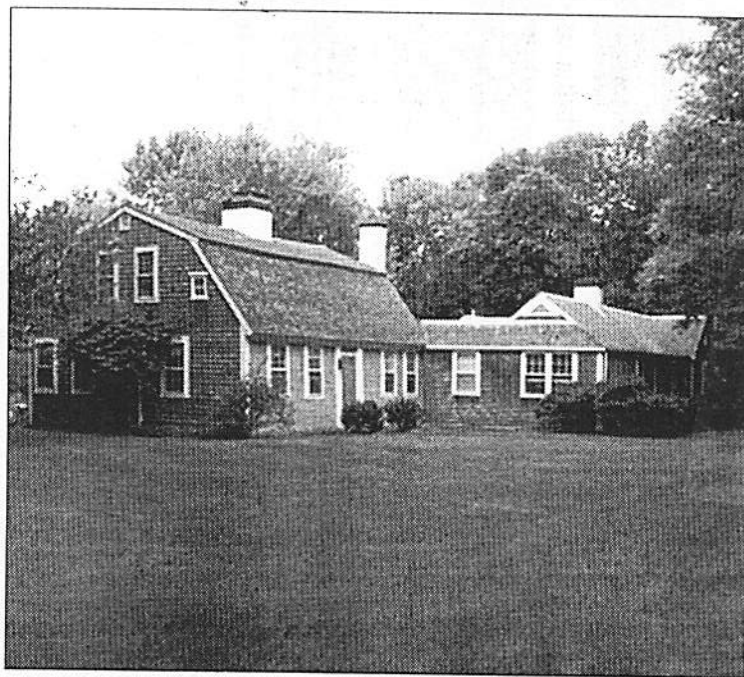
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# Duxbury Early Settlers: Palmer

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As a family of three, each being allotted 20 acres, the Palmers received a grant of 60 acres in the Second Plymouth Division of 1627. In addition they received a "salt meadow" grant of five acres. A mystery surrounds William, Jr., as he was living with the family at the time of the grant, but not mentioned in his father's will 10 years later in 1637. William, Jr. married Elizabeth Hodgekins on Mar. 27, 1634 in Plymouth. He could have died, in which case there should have been some record of his death and there isn't, but we think we have learned what happened to him. He may have returned to England, but William, Sr. mentioned his other children, who may have also been in England, in his will. This is intriguing, as William, Sr. was a very religious and considerate man who thought of all his family and friends when he wrote his will.



The Gambrel roofed house at 47 Partridge Rd., owned by John and Julie Truelove.

William Palmer, Sr. was not a young man when he arrived in the colony. He made his will in 1637, about five years after moving from Plymouth to Duxbury. A clear picture of the nature of this man is obvious from a reading of his will. He appointed Bradford, Winslow and Prence, three men who would eventually serve as Governor of the colony, as his administrators. He instructs them to "deal well" with his young wife, because she is "dear to me." They are to sell off most of his property and she was to have "no less than one third of the money." Palmer suspected she was expecting his baby and specified that, if that were so, one third of the estate would go to his unborn child. It appears he was right, as a son William was born on June 27, 1638 approximately seven months after William, Sr. died.

This third William married a Susanna in 1662 and we believe, moved on to New town, Long Island. William, Sr. also specified that, if his wife was not expecting, the money should go to Rebecca, his granddaughter, and Mose Rowley "whom I love," but whom we today know nothing about. The money wasn't to be put in their parent's hands, but preserved for them "till they come to years of discretion." Palmer also hoped Rowley would be placed with Ralph Partridge so "he might be brought up in the fear of God," (and be tutored) if his father allowed it.

Palmer also remembered his children Henry and Bridgitt, "if they be living," suggesting they were in England. Further "it was the will of the testator (William, Sr.) that his wife should be ruled by her "ancient," Mr. Edward

Winslow, in her marriage if she "look to partake in any part of this estate, otherwise not." The term "ancient" here refers to a sage, venerable person (often older) to provide advice to the new widow. He also remembered his friends Stephen Tracy, John Willis and "the church at Plymouth." All in all, he was a thoughtful and considerate man.

A substantial amount of confusion surrounds the three William Palmers. Some have the wrong William (the one born in 1612 who we're calling junior) moving on to Long Island, which was not the case. Some evidence comes from a court case in which John Willis and his wife, Elizabeth, brought a case against the Palmer Administrators for £20, claiming a lot of land he had the rights to because of his marriage to his wife, Elizabeth, who had been the wife of William Palmer, Jr. This leads one to believe that, not only was his son dead, but his widow had remarried - ample reason for William, Sr. to have left William, Jr. out of the will. John Willis' claim was denied.

William Palmer's homestead farm was sold for £100 in 1638 to Thomas Besbee of Scituate. The Besbee name has since morphed into Bisby or Bisbee. Mr. Besbee sold the homestead farm to John Reyner in 1647 for £35 in corn and cattle - "goats excepted." Besbee was to pay for the property with corn and cattle (but, no goats); it seems that goats were relatively worthless at the time. John Reyner was the teacher in the church in Plymouth. He moved to Duxbury because of his being well acquainted with the Rev. Ralph Partridge. Five years after he bought it, John Reyner sold the property at a loss for £25 to Ralph Partridge and moved on to parts unknown.

Ralph Partridge was the much revered first minister of Duxbury's First Parish Church. He served the town well for over 20 years and compared to some who followed, he could

be described as the best of the best. In addition to his preaching and church activities he was often called upon to tutor the young men in town in the hope for them to move on to Harvard. Evidence of this can be seen in Mr. Palmer's will above, in regard to Moses Rowley.

Ralph Partridge died in 1658, lamented by friends, family, parish and colony leaders. There were many tributes showing the respect he commanded throughout New England. He was buried in the graveyard by the first meeting house. Although there is no headstone, there is a cobblestoned area about the size of a grave. It was uncovered in the late 1800s, and is possibly the final resting place of Duxbury's first minister. When the Rev. Ralph died he had accumulated over 150 acres in different areas of town. The bulk of his property was left to his daughter, Elizabeth, the only daughter to come to New England. She deeded some of his property to George Partridge, who, we believe, was the Rev. Ralph's brother. Although he may have had other children in England who eventually migrated to this country, it's most likely that the Partridge descendants in this area are from the George Partridge line.

*See next week's Clipper for the conclusion of this story.*